

Council on Postsecondary Education
Committee on Equal Opportunities
October 15, 2001

Implications of a Rigorous High School Curriculum

The Committee on Equal Opportunities joined the Council on Postsecondary Education September 16, 2001, at the Governor's Conference on Postsecondary Education Trusteeship. Janis I. Somerville, of the University of Maryland and National Association of System Heads, presented national data on the effects that a rigorous high school curriculum has on student achievement and the economic and social implications of offering only some students a pre-college curriculum.

Ms. Somerville's findings are supported by yet another recently released study that looks at the rigor of the high school curriculum. The study titled "Raising Our Sights: No High School Senior Left Behind" recently released by the National Commission on the High School Senior Year is provided. The study found that while 70 percent of today's high school graduates go on to enroll in some form of postsecondary education, only half of those who enroll at four-year institutions leave with a degree. The reason cited is that these students are not prepared in high school for the rigors of college academics. Although 90 percent of college freshmen say they expect to complete college, only 44 percent of them have taken a college-preparatory curriculum in high school that positions them to successfully do so. A particularly negative finding of the study is that a majority of students are pursuing a course of study that lacks rigor or coherence.

Staff preparation by Sherron Jackson